

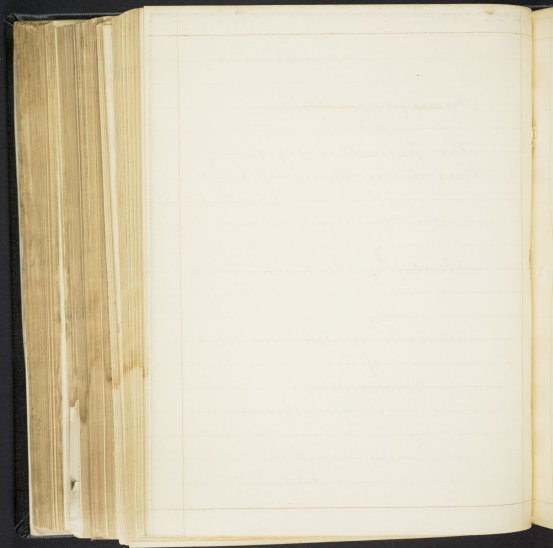
Jun 5<sup>th</sup> 1829

No 68 One

1066 Smith 6<sup>th</sup> St

Inaugural Thesis  
on  
The Remedial Agency of  
Musick in Mental Disease.  
Presented March 9. 1829  
For the Degree  
of  
Doctor of Medicine.  
By  
William W. Johnson A.B.  
of  
Germantown.  
Pennsylvania.

sufficient - as far as it goes -



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*"Minuenter atra  
carmine cura".*

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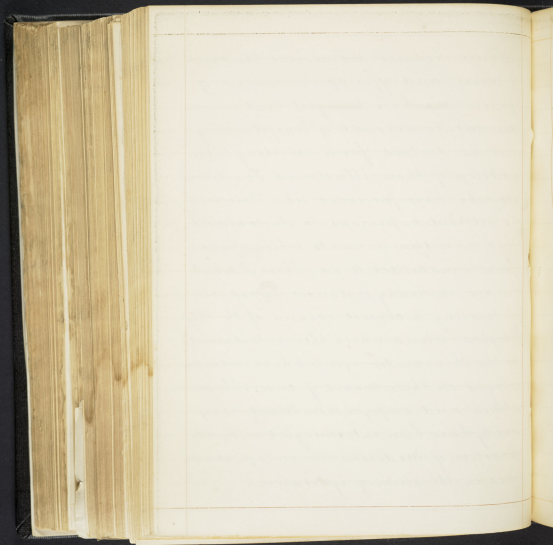
"

The science of Medicine may justly be considered as constituting one of the noblest & most exalted professions within the range of human employments. Taking its rise in the necessities of mankind, for we have no record of the period in which pain and sickness were banished from the earth, its origin may be traced to the remotest antiquity, and we find in every age enrolled among its votaries, individuals who have reflected a lustre upon their country and have ennobled human nature itself from their devotion to the health and happiness of their fellow-citizens.



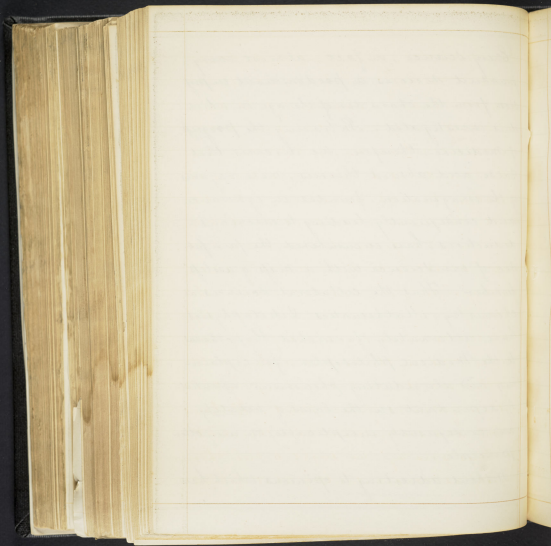


Whilst, however, we award the meed of merit, and offer up the homage of praise, we have to regret that a commensurate amount of benefit, may not be derived from reverting to the writings of those illustrious Practitioners who have preceded us. This may be attributed, perhaps, to the confused and uncertain accounts which have been transmitted to us, through which we are, in many instances, incapable of forming a correct opinion of the Physiological views which they entertained, or the Therapeutic agents which were employed in their means of cure. Superstition and empiricism must necessarily have been intermingled with the practice of Medicine, in an age sunk in the gloom of ignorance.

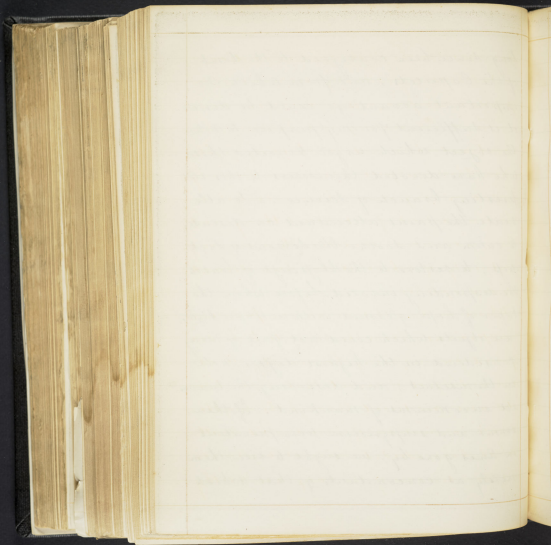


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Every science, in fact, almost every  
pursuit receives a predominant impres-  
sion from the character of the age in which  
it is investigated. In tracing the progress  
of medicine, therefore, we discover that  
false and absurd theories, mere vagaries  
of the imagination, founded in ignorance  
and consequently leading to erroneous  
deductions, have encumbered the fair fab-  
ric of our science with a mass of useless  
lumber. Thus the collateral sciences as  
chemistry, Mathematics, &c. &c. have  
alternately furnished hypotheses  
to the Medical philosopher, for explain-  
ing and elucidating phenomena essential-  
ly dependant on the laws of vitality,  
and consequently inexplicable on any other  
principle.

Without adverting to opinions which have



long since been consigned to "the tomb  
 of the Capulets"; and from which no  
 important advantage could be derived,  
 it is sufficient for my purpose to notice  
 the object which urged I induced those  
 who have devoted themselves to this in-  
 teresting branch of science. - To alle-  
 viate the pains attendant on disease,  
 to calm and soothe the sorrows of sick-  
 ness, to restore to the blessings of health  
 the desponding invalid, before whom the  
 taper of hope gleamed with a fitful light,  
 - are objects which could not fail of being  
 considered in the highest degree noble  
 in themselves, and deserving the warm-  
 est encomiums of mankind. If, then,  
 error and empiricism were prevalent  
 in times gone by, we ought to view them  
 merely as concomitants of that which

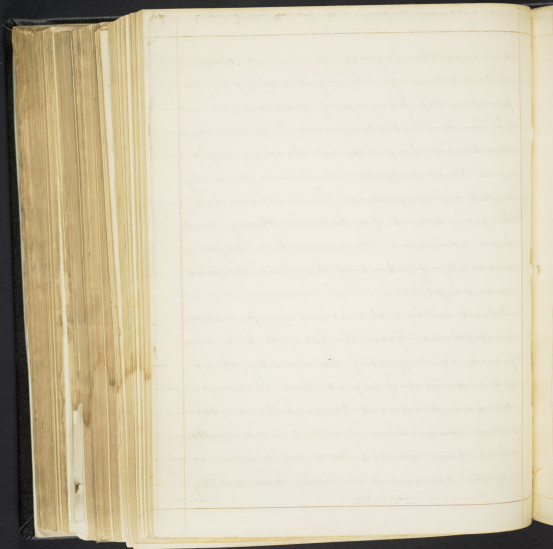


deserves the highest commendation

But error gradually disperses as we pursue the progress of medicine in latter <sup>times</sup> and Physiology and Pathology have combined their aid in shedding light upon those subjects which were formerly veiled in conjecture, have established the ground-work of a rational theory, and have advanced Medicine to a degree of certainty of which it had been deemed unsusceptible.

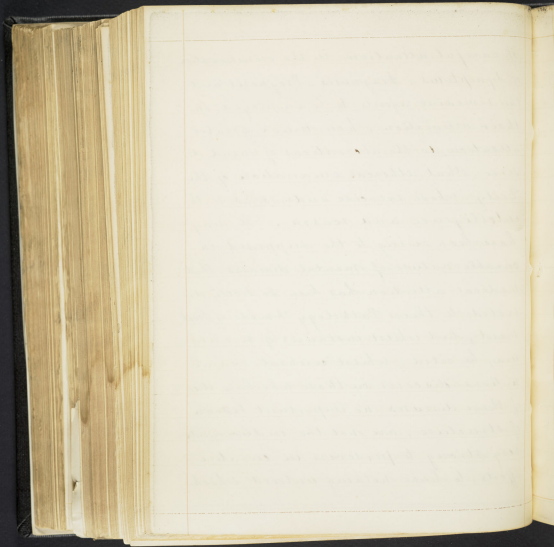
Whilst we hail this as an era peculiarly auspicious from the benefits to be conferred on suffering humanity, it is yet a subject of regret, that there are diseases, produced through the mysterious connection of mind and matter, which have eluded medical vigilance.

If the diseases of the body are worthy



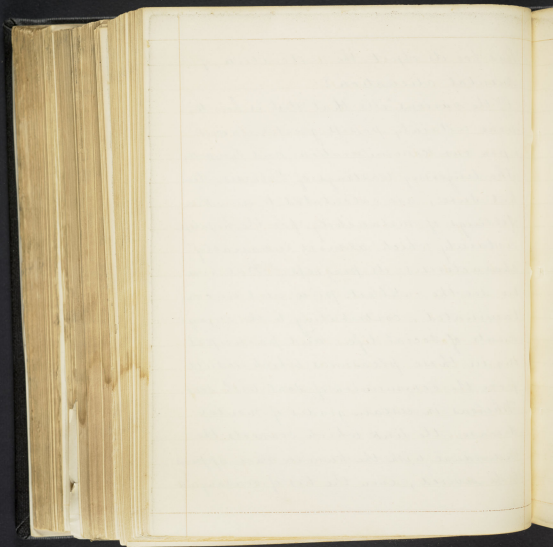


of careful attention, in the enumeration of symptoms, Diagnosis, Prognosis and the remedial agents to be employed in their alleviation, then much greater attention do the aberrations of mind deserve, that ethereal emanation of the Deity, whose exercise endows us with intelligence and reason. It may have been owing to the supposed incurable nature of mental diseases, that medical attention has been so little directed to their Pathology & mode of treating them, but whilst instances of recovery may be cited, whilst cerebral examinations discover in those who have died of these diseases no important lesion of structure, are not the inducements very strong to persevere in curative efforts, to leave nothing untried which



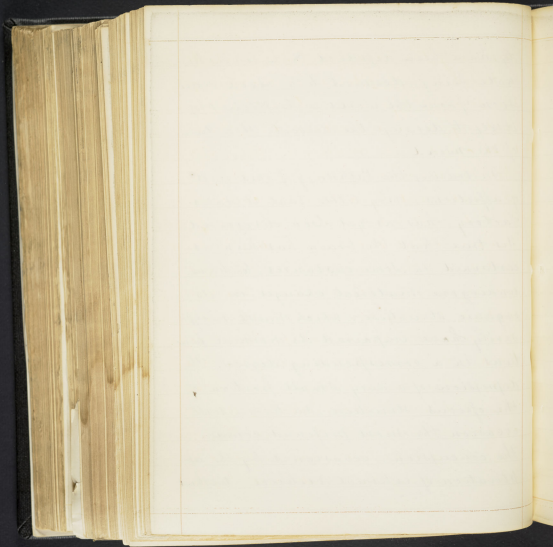
Has for its object, the restoration of  
mental alienation?

Of the various "ills that flesh is heir to",  
none certainly possess greater claims  
upon our commiseration and sympathy.  
The lingering wastings of Phthisis, slow  
but sure, are calculated to awaken  
feelings of melancholy for the hopeless  
certainty which almost invariably  
characterises its progress. But here  
we see the intellect pure and uncon-  
taminated, contributing to the enjoy-  
ments of social life; and participat-  
ing in those pleasures which result  
from the communion of soul with soul.  
Whereas in certain grades of mental  
disease, the link which connects the  
individual with the human race appears  
to be severed, even the ties of consanguinity



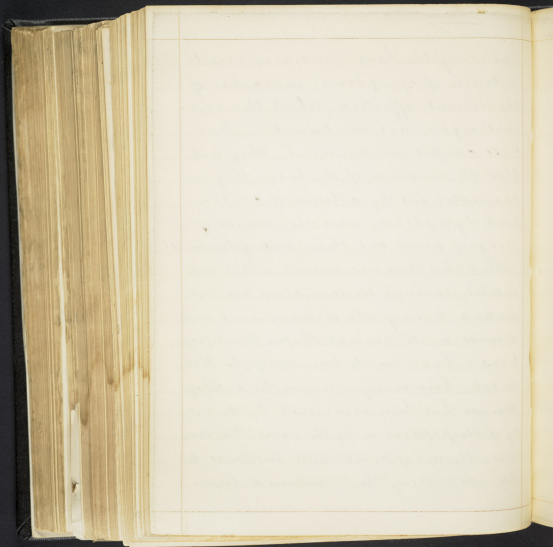
ity have been dissolved & the unfortunate being, doomed to a rigid seclusion from the world - sufficient of itself to derange the delicate structure of the mind.

In tracing the Pathology of this class of affections, very little that is satisfactory, has, as yet been discovered. 'Tis true that the brain has been ascertained in some instances, to have undergone material changes in its organic structure, which must necessarily have impaired its normal functions in a corresponding degree. The depression of a very small portion of the opacous structure, we know, will occasion the most profound coma. The concussion, occasioned by the application of external violence, without



injuring the Bone, will give rise to a train of symptoms, indicative of the serious affection, which this important organ has sustained. — But these causes are material, they act thro' the medium of the body, they are characterised by a train of concomitant symptoms, and the annals of surgery point out their mode of treatment.

But that there are causes which act entirely through the mind, no one will pretend to deny who is conversant with disease in its various shapes & modifications. Examine the tenants of the Hospital, how many will you find, whose disease has been occasioned by the agency of the passions — by the cares, the troubles, the disappointments incident to life, depressing the mind and super-

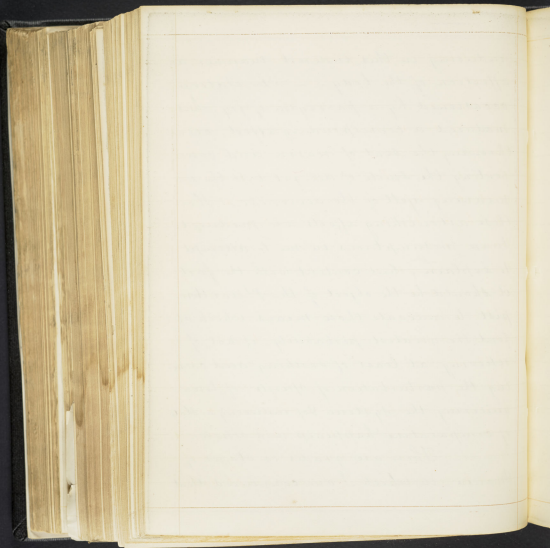




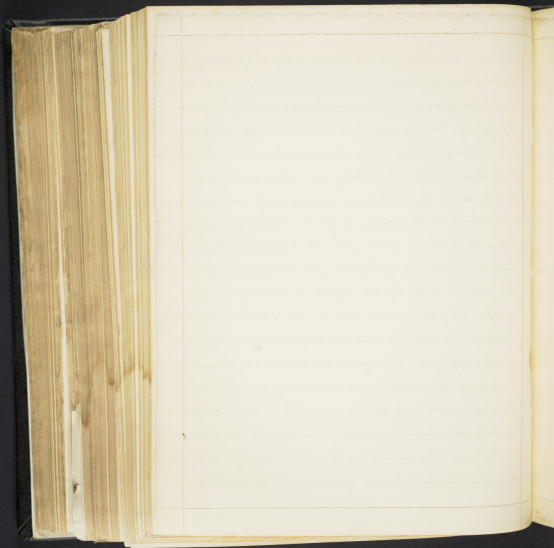
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- inducing in this indirect manner, an affection of the body. — The elation occasioned by a paroxysm of joy, has produced a corresponding effect, overthrowing the seat of reason and converting the smile of delight, into the unmeaning yell of the demoniac. How these astonishing effects are produced, 'twere presumptuous in me to attempt to explain, but content with the fact it should be the object of the Philanthropist to indicate those means which afford the greatest probability, if not of relieving, at least of soothing and calming the perturbation of spirits, of tranquillizing the system & inducing a state of comparative happiness and repose.

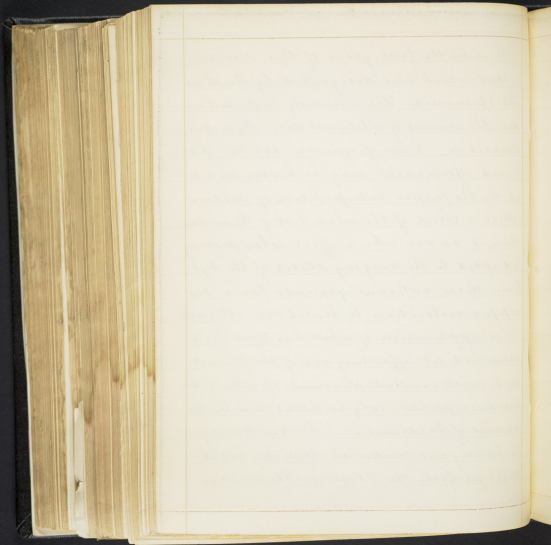
There are grades or stages of Mania, in which I am convinced that



curative measures may be happily  
interposed with the most beneficial con-  
sequences: — as, in the forming or first  
stage of the most violent Fevers, before  
the sympathies connecting together those  
organs whose healthy functions are es-  
sential to life have been fully establish-  
ed, before the chain of morbid associa-  
tion has been wrought throughout the sys-  
tem, the work of disorganization may  
be prevented by the well-directed efforts  
of the Physician. And, as there are  
cases, in which the recuperative energies  
of the system are prostrated at the very  
onset of disease, precluding all possi-  
bility of reaction: — so there are cases  
of Mania, from whatever cause induced,  
in which the mind is so thoroughly distor-  
ed, as to be incapable of being reinstated.

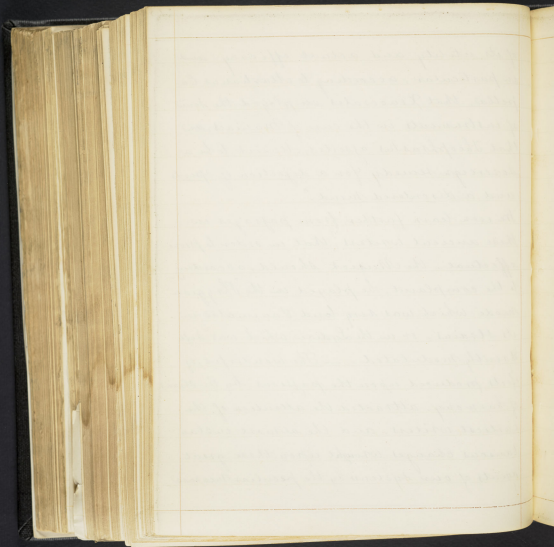


It is in the first grade of this disease,  
 — that which was designated by Rush as  
 Tristitia. His variously included un-  
 der the names of Melancholia, Hypochon-  
 driasis &c. I am of opinion that the dis-  
 eased associations may be broken in up-  
 on by the proper interposition of Medical  
 Skill. And of the whole list of Remedies,  
 there is no one which offers, when properly  
 adapted to the varying states of the Sys-  
 tem, more rational grounds for a suc-  
 cessful restoration to health than Music.  
 This application of what has ever been  
 esteemed as affording one of the purest  
 and most exalted pleasures of which we  
 are susceptible, is by no means new in the  
 annals of Medicine. — Bishop Burney  
 in his elegant treatise on Music, cites  
 passages from the Classics illustrative



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of its utility and actual efficacy: and  
in particular, according to Martianus Ca-  
pella, "that Xenocrates employed the sound  
of instruments in the cure of Maniacs, and  
that Theophrastus asserted Musick to be a  
sovereign remedy for a dejection of spirits  
and a disordered mind."

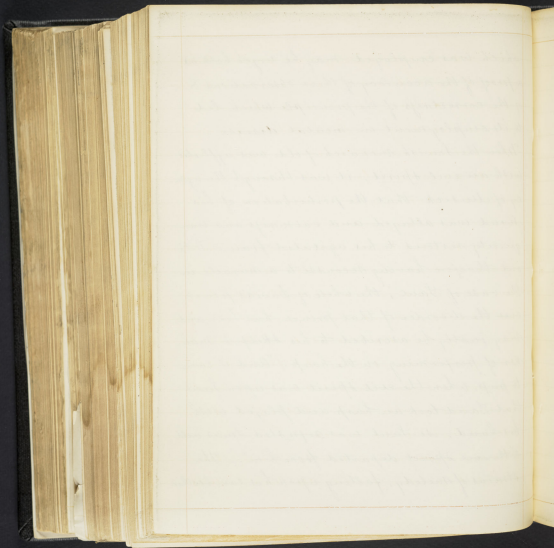
We even learn further from passages in  
these ancient writers, that in order to prove  
effectual, the Musick should, according  
to the complaint, be played in the "Phrygian  
mode" which was very loud & animated in  
its strains, or in the "Lydian" which was soft  
& gently modulated. — The wonderful ef-  
fects produced upon the passions by the strains  
of harmony, attracted the attention of the  
earliest writers, and the almost instan-  
taneous changes wrought upon these great  
agents of our system by the peculiar measures





which was employed, may be urged both as a proof of the accuracy of their observations & of the correctness of the principle which led to its employment in mental disease.

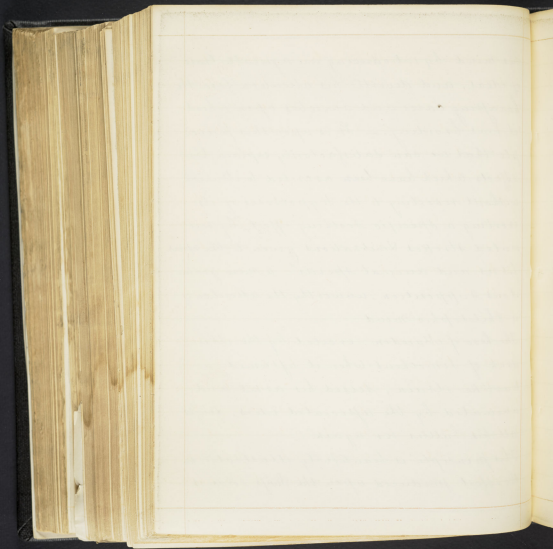
When the Jewish monarch of old was afflicted with an evil spirit, it was through the agency of music that the perturbation of his mind was allayed and calmness and tranquillity restored to his agitated frame. Without therefore having recourse to a miracle in the case of Saul, the whole of David's power over the disorder of that prince has been, and may justly be ascribed to his skilful manner of performing on the harp. "And it came to pass, when the evil spirit was upon Saul that David took an harp and played with his hand, so Saul was refreshed & was well & the evil spirit departed from him". — The strains of melody, falling upon his ear, soothed



his mind by introducing an agreeable train of ideas, and diverted his attention from the harassing cares and anxieties upon which it was brooding. — It is upon this principle that we can satisfactorily explain the effects which have been ascribed to Musick without resorting to the Hypothesis of its exerting a specific soothing effect, "by reiterated strokes & vibrations given to the nervous fibres and animal spirits" — a mere gratuitous supposition, unworthy the attention of a Philosophic mind.

The hero of Macedonia, excited by the Musick of Timotheus when it assumed a warlike strain, seized his arms and animated by the associated ideas, fought all his battles "over again".

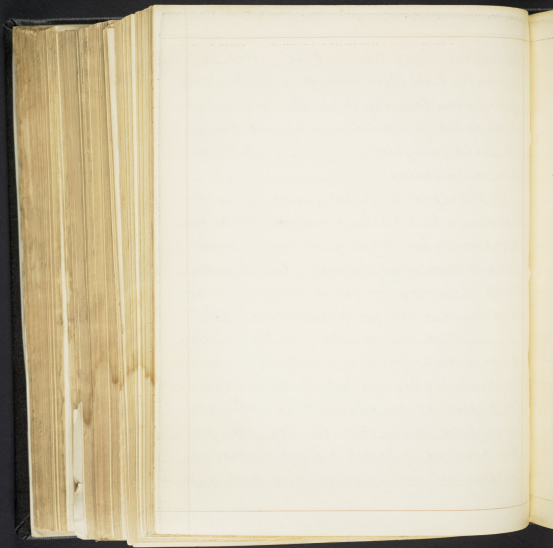
This principle is beautifully illustrated in the effect produced upon the Swiss soldiers



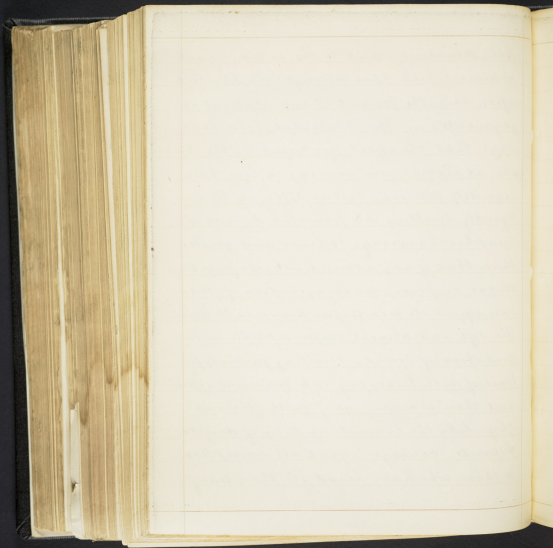
by bearing a particular tone which is connected in their minds with the scenes of juvenile felicity, when the buoyant spirit steamed free and unconfined through the wild majestic scenery of their native mountains.

"The intrepid Swiss that guards a foreign shore  
 Condemned to climb his mountain cliffs no more.  
 If chance he hear the song, so sweetly wild,  
 Which, on those cliffs, his infant hours beguiled,  
 Melts at the long lost scenes that round him rise,  
 And sinks a martyr to repentant sighs."

But, independant of the principle of association, there is a certain harmony in musical sounds, which chimes in with the passions, modifying their actions & restraining their impetuosity. - It is this concord of sweet sounds blended in unison, which has given rise to the raptures

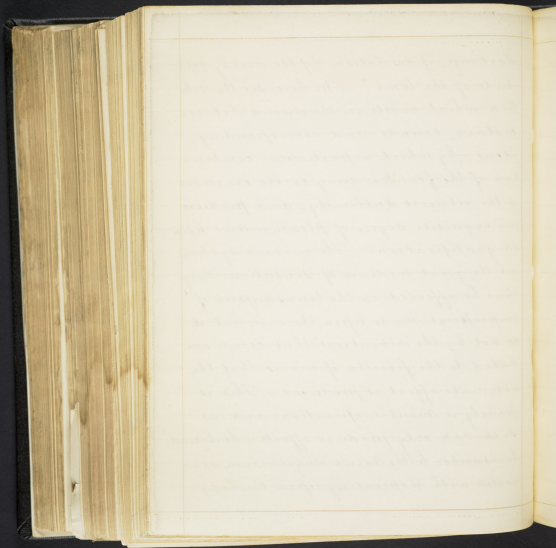


of the Amateur, and to the extravagant praises which have always been lavished upon this, the pursuit of our sentient enjoyments. — The celebrated John Bell says that "the effect produced by the Music at Rome commencing in low, rich exquisite strains, rising softly on the ear & gently swelling into powerful sounds of seraphic harmony, is finer and greater than that of any admired art; no painting, statue or poem, no imagination of man can equal its wonderful power on the mind. The soft and almost imperceptible accumulation of sound, swelling in mournful tones of rich harmony into powerful effort and then receding as if in the distant sky, like the lamenting song of angels & spirits, conveys beyond all conception to those who have heard it, the idea of

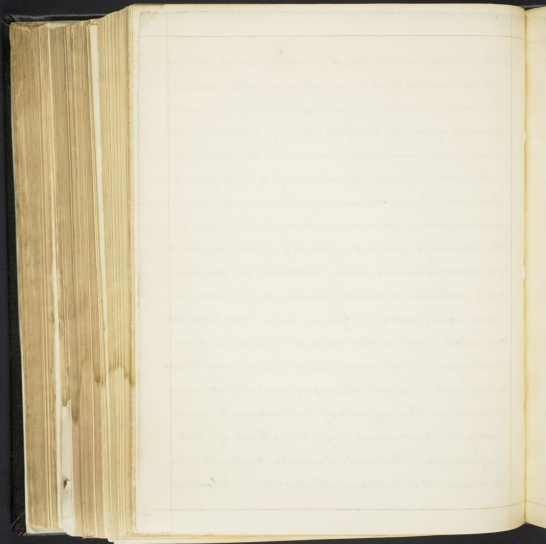




darkness, of desolation & of the dreary solitude of the tomb." — We here see the relation which exists in the mind between certain sounds and corresponding ideas, by which a particular combination of the former may excite emotions of the utmost sublimity, and produce an exquisite degree of pleasure and refined gratification. The nervous system, as the great medium of sensation, may thus be affected in the transmission of impressions made upon the ear, but it is not by the vibrations thus communicated to the fibrillæ of nerves that the ultimate effect is produced. This is purely a mental operation, and as such can only produce effects which must be ascribed to the mind, mysteriously connected with & operating upon the body.

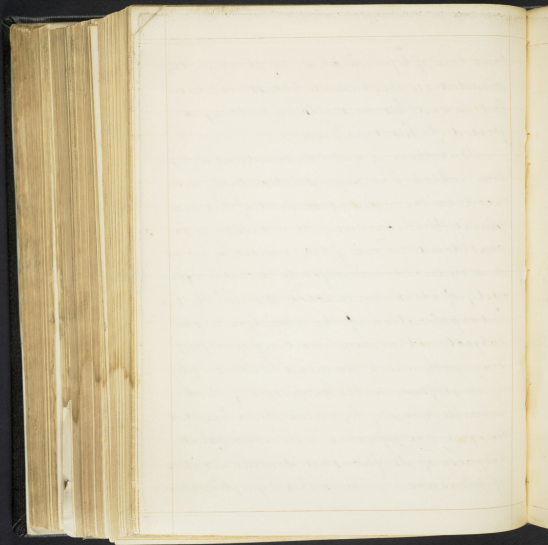


-The peculiar form of derangement which I have mentioned as designated under the term Tristimania, is not the result merely of a disordered imagination affecting a body otherwise in the enjoyment of health & performance of all its functions. It is really a disease of the mind, an inferior grade of mania itself, - in which the distress and suffering of the patient are described as being intense in degree and attended with feelings of indescribable anguish. Gloom and despondency settle upon the mind, and the forebodings of evil cast their flighting shade upon all the exertions of intellect and paralyse the efforts of both mind and body. Agonised by the extent of his sufferings, the unfortunate patient soon becomes the victim of despair, floating

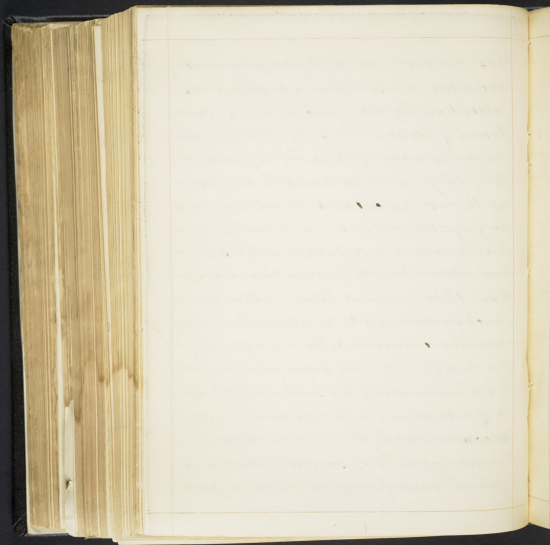


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that love of life which is so strongly im-  
planted in the human breast is impel-  
led to end his miseries by putting a  
period to his existence.

But there is one concomitant symp-  
tom, which has been particularly no-  
ticed in the commencement of this com-  
plaint, & which may, in a measure, be  
considered as one of the causes by which  
it is induced. I refer to a certain fix-  
idity of ideas, contracted through the mor-  
bid application of the attention to one  
subject either very inciting or depres-  
sing, with which the mind becomes entire-  
ly engrossed, to the exclusion of that  
agreeable variety by which its exhausted  
energies are refreshed & the appropriate  
exercise of its faculties communicative  
of pleasure. - It is this symptom which



has obviously led to the employment of remedies whose object is to divert the attention by introducing an agreeable train of ideas. In fact, this intention might be accomplished by referring to any subjects which could be suggested as the best calculated to interest and engage the patient, even though experience would not sanction their habitual use. It is to answer this indication, that manual labour either in the mechanical arts or in agriculture, commercial engagements &c, by agitating the individual with hopes and fears, and animating his soul with the spirit of enterprise, have been so strongly recommended by the most authoritative writers upon this subject. And it is from the powerful effects which are produced

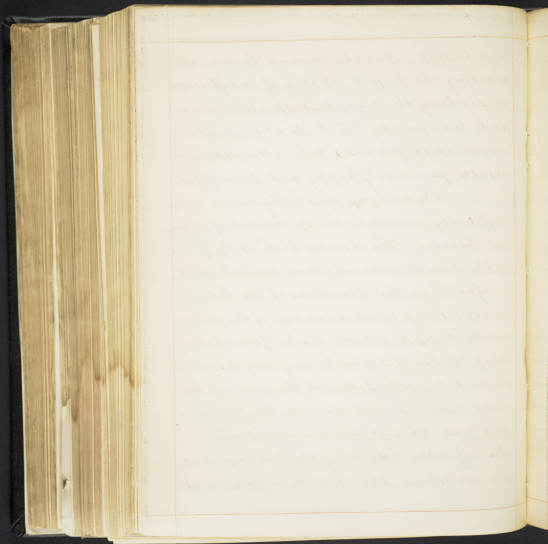




by Music upon the human frame, in arousing the torpid apathy of indifference or soothing the turbulent spirit to peace and tranquillity, that its appropriate application promises to be attended with results peculiarly happy and successful.

Sydenham was fully aware of the difficulty attending the treatment of mental diseases. He observes that "as the frame of the mind is much more curious and artful than the structure of the body, as consisting in an harmony of the most excellent and almost divine faculties; so, if the constitution be any way disordered, the evil must be so much the greater, the more excellent and delicate the workmanship was, while it remained entire".

The difficulty attending the management of a complaint should rather operate as



an incentive to the Physician, demanding the application of all his resources with the exercise of motives both physical and intellectual.

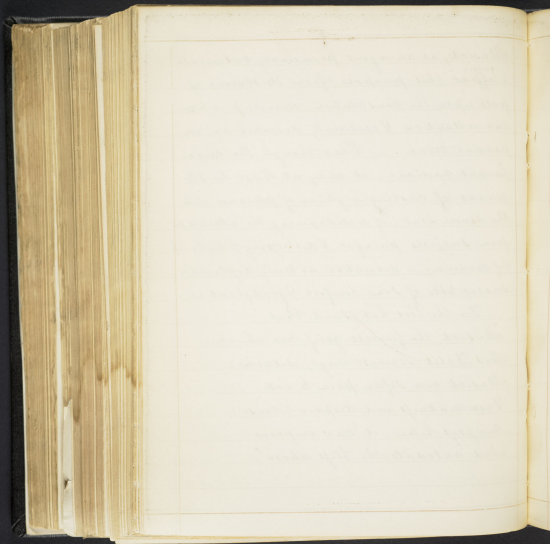
In the cure of these affections, it appears ~~it appears~~ that the remedies have been rather directed to the body which only becomes ultimately involved through its dependency on the mind, than to the true seat of the disease. And though the capacity of "ministering to a mind diseas'd" may not fall within the power of the Physician, yet it were vain to attempt a cure whilst this is in a state of aberration; for, so long as the exciting cause continues in operation, in this as in all complaints, all efforts at relief will prove unavailing, and it is only thro' its removal that we can hope for success in the use of our remedies.

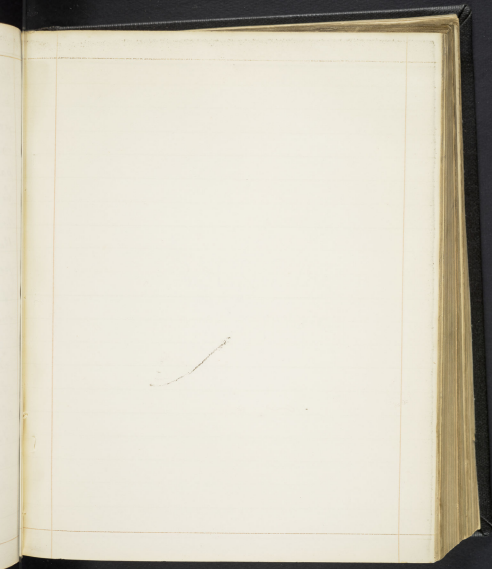
the first of the year was a  
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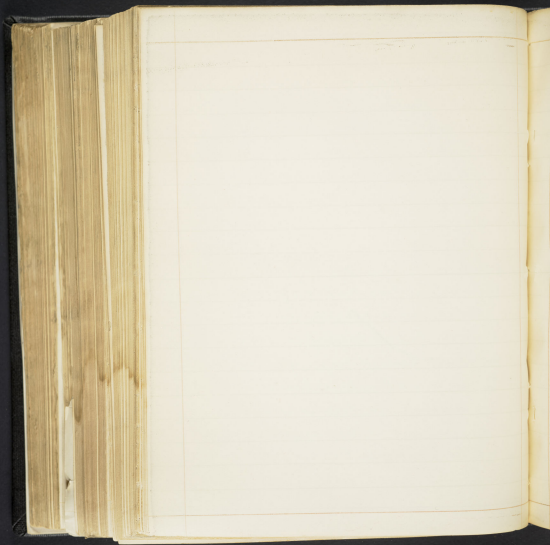
Musick, as an agent peculiarly calculated  
 to <sup>purge</sup> ~~effect~~ this purpose from its obvious ef-  
 fects upon the constitution, merits particu-  
 lar attention. Certainly deserves an im-  
 partial trial. — Even though the cure  
 be not radical, it may at least be the  
 means of casting a gleam of pleasure into  
 the riven soul, of withdrawing the attention  
 from subjects painful & distressing to the heart  
 & of rendering a situation so truly deplorable,  
 susceptible of some comfort & gratification.

For the Poet has said that,

"Musick the fiercest grief can charm,  
 And Fate's severest rage disarm;  
 Musick can soften pain to ease,  
 From madness and despair release;  
 Our joys below, it can improve  
 And antedate the bliss above."









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